Telepresence and Fantasy in Online Apparel Shopping Experience

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Recommended Citation
Song, Kun; Fiore, Ann Marie; and Park, Jihye, "Telepresence and Fantasy in Online Apparel Shopping Experience" (2005). Apparel, Events and Hospitality Management Conference Proceedings and Presentations. 69.
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Abstract
In this study, we propose that telepresence enhances experiential value through facilitation of imagery that involves post-purchase use of the product, termed "fantasy".

Keywords
telepresence, fantasy, experiential value, online apparel shopping

Disciplines
E-Commerce | Fashion Business | Marketing | Technology and Innovation

Comments
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Telepresence and Fantasy in Online Apparel Shopping Experience

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Key words: telepresence, fantasy, experiential value, online apparel shopping

Background

Advances in website features (i.e., virtual 3D modeling) have helped the consumer approximate the product experience in a brick-and-mortar store. This simulated product experience is tapped by the construct of telepresence (Klein, 2003; Shih, 1998; XXX, in press), which involves computer-mediated quality and quantity of information and ability to interact with an object or environment as found in the real environment (e.g., brick-and-mortar store). Telepresence positively affects consumer responses (e.g., willingness to purchase) by providing more complete information during evaluation of products (utilitarian value) and by augmenting pleasure (experiential value) during the shopping experience (XXX, in press). We further understanding of the effect of telepresence on consumer responses by examining the mechanism between telepresence and experiential value. In the present study, we propose that telepresence enhances experiential value through facilitation of imagery that involves post-purchase use of the product, termed “fantasy”. This proposition is in line with Holbrook’s (1986) Consciousness-Emotion-Value (CEV) model of consumption, which outlines that consciousness facilitates formation of emotion, which in turn, determines consumer value. According to the model, consciousness includes a variety of mental events such as fantasy during the consumption experience. Research (Fiore, Yan, & Yoh, 2000; MacInnis and Price, 1987) illustrates consumer responses are positively affected by such mental events. We also examine the effect of experiential/hedonic value on consumer responses. Further, we examine the effect of willingness to purchase on willingness to patronize (e.g., revisit the site) (See Graphic 1 for model hypotheses).

Figure 1. Path analysis model showing hypotheses and statistical values.
We used data gathered from eighty-six female undergraduate students of a Midwest university of the Notes: Standardized path estimates are reported with t-values in parentheses.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$

stimulate telepresence (XXX, in press) and then completed a questionnaire. Multi-item scales, found to be reliable (alpha>.70) in past research and the present study, were used to measure telepresence (XXX, in press), fantasy (Fiore & Yu, 2001), experiential value (McQuarrie and Munson, 1986), and willingness to purchase from and patronize the website (XXX, in press).

Results of the study supported all hypotheses except hypothesis 5 (Graphic 1). Telepresence had a significant direct effect on fantasy, but explained a small fraction ($R^2 = .08$) of its variance, suggesting that other factors may influence fantasy. Telepresence and fantasy both significantly affected shopping enjoyment, which led to willingness to purchase. Additionally, telepresence displayed a positive direct effect on willingness to purchase, which may be due to the ability of telepresence to help consumers acquire product information needed for rational decision-making before purchase. The hypothesis proposing a direct effect of fantasy on willingness to purchase was not supported, but fantasy affected willingness to purchase indirectly through enhanced shopping enjoyment. Therefore, fantasy may augment the experiential value of the shopping experience rather than assist rational decision-making. This supported Holbrook and Hirschman’s (1982) claim that experiential elements (fantasy, feelings, and fun) deserve to be studied for their intrinsic value instead of focusing on their direct relationship with purchase decisions. Future studies may test the effect of situational product presentations (e.g., 3D model wearing a swimsuit on a beach) on produce fantasy, experiential value, and consumer responses. In line with the CEV model, future studies may also explore the role of fantasy created by telepresence on emotional state, such as level of emotional pleasure, arousal, and dominance and resulting consumer responses towards the retailer and product.

Reference


XXX, (in press). Effect of image interactivity technology on approach responses towards the online retailer. *Journal of Interactive Marketing.*